DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 166 CG 017 210

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TITLE A Comparison of Authoritarian and Permissive Wording of Hypnotic Suggestions.
PUB DATE 26 Aug 83
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (91st, Anaheim, CA, August 26-30, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Authoritarianism; Behavior Patterns; College Students; Emotional Response; Higher Education; *Hypnosis; *Personality Traits; *Responses
IDENTIFIERS *Creative Imagination Scale (Wilson and Barber); *Permissiveness; Trust

ABSTRACT

The authoritarian/permissive dimension of hypnosis refers to the manner in which hypnotic suggestions are phrased. In the authoritarian mode suggestions imply the subject is under control of the hypnotist; permissive suggestions are phrased to emphasize the subject's own thinking. To compare the permissive suggestions of the Creative Imagination Scale (CIS) with similar but authoritarian suggestions, and to investigate the relationship of suggestion mode to three personality characteristics (absorption, interpersonal trust, and attitudes toward hyponosis), 206 college students (40 male, 166 female) completed the Attitudes to Hypnosis Scale; listened to an authoritarian or permissively worded hypnotic induction; and listened to audiotapes of ten hypnotic suggestions which were authoritarian or permissive. Subsequently the subjects completed the CIS, the Tellegen Absorption Scale, and the Interpersonal Trust Scale. An analysis of the results showed that permissively worded suggestions were perceived by the subjects as being more like reality than were suggestions in the authoritarian mode. The three personality characteristics were positively and significantly related to authoritarian hypnosis. Only absorption was significantly correlated to permissively worded suggestions. (BL)

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A COMPARISON OF AUTHORITARIAN AND PERMISSIVE WORDING OF HYPNOTIC SUGGESTIONS

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Presented at 91st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association at Anaheim, California, August, 1983.

Sponsored by Division 30, Psychological Hypnosis; presented at Hilton at the Park Hotel, Arcade I, at 3:00-4:50 on Friday, August 26, 1983.

CG 017210

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ABSTRACT

The Creative Imagination Scale was created and promoted by Wilson and Barber as being a permissive measure of hypnotic responsiveness. They assert that other measures are too authoritarian for today's society. This study compared the permissive wording of the Creative Imagination Scale to parallel, but authoritarianly worded suggestions. The personality variables of absorption, interpersonal trust and attitude toward hypnosis were correlated to authoritarian and permissive responsiveness. Subjects were 206 undergraduate psychology students enrolled at a midwest university. Results indicate that subjects rated permissive suggestions as being more like reality than authoritarian suggestions. All three personality variables were significantly correlated to authoritarian suggestions. Only absorption was significantly correlated to permissive hypnosis.

A COMPARISON OF AUTHORITARIAN AND PERMISSIVE
WORDING OF HYPNOTIC SUGGESTIONS

The authoritarian/permissive dimension of hypnosis has been of interest to researchers and practitioners for a number of years. The distinction that Ferinizi makes between father and mother hypnosis is essentially one of authoritarian and permissive styles (In Winn, 1965). Father hypnosis being roughly equivalent to authoritarian hypnosis and mother hypnosis being more permissive in nature. Shor (1962) seemed to be referring to the authoritarian/permissive aspect of hypnosis when he wrote of the presence or absence of "archaic involvement." London (1967) used the adjectives "charismatic" and "democratic" to refer to these different styles of hypnosis. The difference between authoritarian and permissive hypnosis in this study is essentially derived from the subtle manner in which suggestions are phrased. In authoritarian hypnosis, the suggestions are worded to imply that the subject is under the control of the hypnotist. With permissive hypnosis, suggestions are phrased to emphasize that the subject is to produce the suggested experience by using his or her own thinking, rather than to be under the control of the hypnotist.

Wilson and Barber (1978) constructed the Creative Imagination Scale (CIS) to measure permissive hypnotic responsiveness because they believed that existing scales were too authoritarian in snytax. Wilson and Barber assert that commonly used instruments such as the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scales (Weitzenhoffer and Hilgard, 1959, 1962, 1963), the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility (Shor and Orne, 1962) and the Barber Suggestibility Scale (Barber, 1969) are out of tune with today's more permissive society. The CIS was offered as a permissive means of measuring the hypnotic response.

The problem presented to this study was to compare the permissive suggestions of the CIS with similar, but authoritarian suggestions. To accomplish this comparison, the ten suggestions of the CIS were rewritten in a parallel, but authoritarian fashion. If the permissive suggestions of the CIS are more effective than are the authoritarian suggestions, then subjects should rate them as being more like reality. Conversely, if the CIS is rated as being less like reality, then it would seem that Wilson and Barber's contention that existing scales are too authoritarian, is unsupported and that the CIS is likely just one among many measures of hypnotic predisposition.

In addition to making a direct comparison of authoritarianly and permissively worded hypnotic suggestions, three personality characteristics were measured and correlated with both authoritarian and permissive suggestions. These personality characteristics were absorption (Tellegen, 1978), interpersonal trust (Rotter, 1967) and attitudes toward hypnosis (Barber and Claverley, 1966). Based on the results of previous studies (i.e., Tellegen and Atkinson, 1978) Periera, 1978; Spanos and McPeake, 1975), it was hypothesized that these three personality variables would be positively related to both authoritarian and permissive measures of hypnotic responsiveness. Specifically, it was thought that subjects high in hypnotic response (under both authoritarian and permissive conditions) would be high in absorption, high in trust and that they would have a favorable attitude toward hypnosis. Low hypnotic responsive subjects were thought to be low in absorption, low in trust and they were thought to have a negative attitude toward hypnosis.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were two-hundred-seventeen undergraduate psychology students. As an incentive for volunteering, the subjects were given a

certificate of participation. Eleven subjects were excluded from the study because of incomplete data on the hypnosis or personality measures. A total of 102 subjects were given authoritarian suggestions and 104 subjects were given permissive suggestions. Of the subjects receiving permissive suggestions, 20 were male and 84 were female. Of those receiving authoritarian suggestions, 20 were male and 82 were female. The ratio of males to females in each group is consistent with the ratio of students enrolled in psychology classes during the time of this study.

Procedure. The subjects were divided into male and female groups and then (with the help of a table of random numbers) were assigned to authoritarian and permissive experimental conditions. Subjects read and signed informed consent forms and were scheduled for experimental sessions. Experimental sessions were held on alternating days for each experimental condition. Subjects attended experimental sessions in groups of six to fifteen. All experimental instructions were presented by means of an audiocassette recorder. Subjects were first asked to fill out the Attitudes to Hypnosis Scale. Subjects then listened to either an authoritarianly or permissively worded (tape recorded) hypnotic induction. Next, subjects listened to a recording of ten hypnotic suggestions that were either authoritarianly or permissively worded. Subjects proceeded to fill out the self-rating form of the CIS. Lastly subjects were asked to complete the Tellegen Absorption Scale and the Interpersonal Trust Scale in a counterbalanced order. The entire experimental session required approximately one hour to complete.

Results

The findings of this study indicate that permissively worded suggestions were perceived by subjects as being more like reality than were authoritarianly worded suggestions. The three personality variables were positively and

significantly related to authoritarian hypnosis. Only absorption was significantly correlated to permissively worded suggestions.

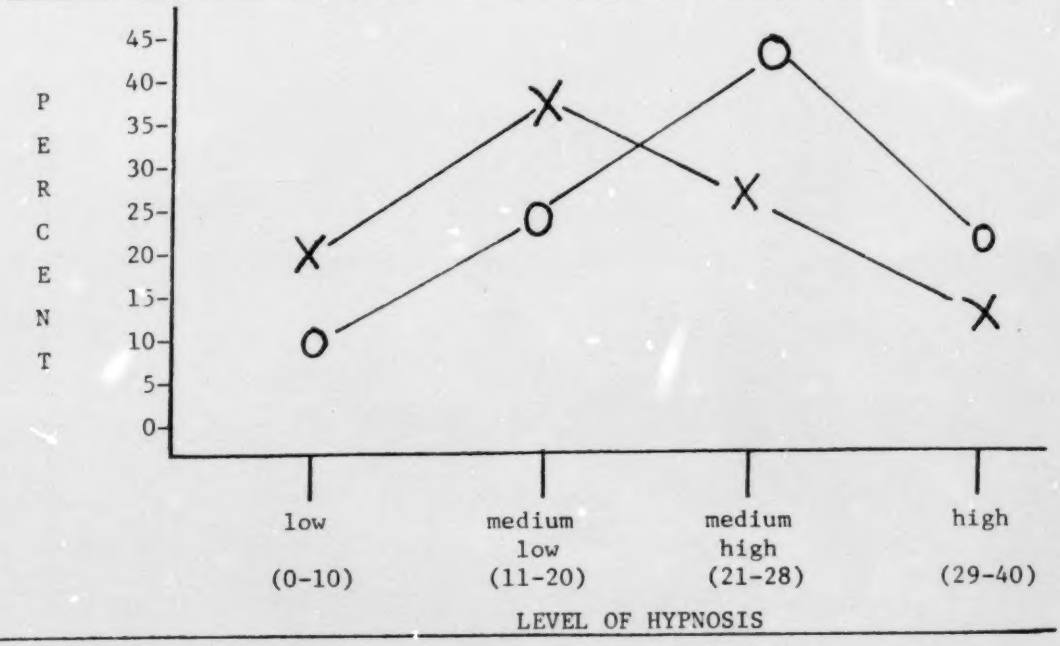
TABLE 1
t Test for Independent Groups

Comparison of Authoritarian and Permissive Suggestions

Group	X	SD	n	df	*t*
Authoritarian	17.96	9.19	102	204	3.20**
Permissive	21.87	9.33	104		

** $p < .01$

FIGURE 1
Percent of Subjects in Each "Level" of Hypnosis



As can be seen in Table 1, the t test for uncorrelated groups indicates that permissively worded suggestions were rated as being significantly more like reality than were suggestions worded authoritarianly. This finding was statistically significant at the 0.01 level of confidence with 204 degrees of freedom. Means for the authoritarian and permissive conditions were 17.96 and 21.87, respectively. In Figure 1, it is observed that permissive hypnosis resulted in a higher percentage of subjects in each of the high levels of hypnosis (levels adopted from Barber and Wilson, 1978-1979, p. 93) and that authoritarian suggestions resulted in a higher percentage of subjects in each of the low levels of hypnosis.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Each Authoritarian and Permissive Suggestion

Suggestion	Authoritarian	Permissive	Difference	t
1. Arm Heaviness	2.2	2.8	0.6	3.67**
2. Hand Levitation	1.5	1.8	0.3	1.81
3. Finger Anesthesia	1.5	1.8	0.3	1.64
4. Water Hallucination	1.4	1.8	0.4	2.39*
5. Orange Hallucination	1.1	1.9	0.8	4.76**
6. Music Hallucination	2.0	2.2	0.2	1.01
7. Heat Hallucination	1.5	2.0	0.5	2.77**
8. Time Distortion	2.3	2.6	0.3	1.72
9. Age Regression	2.1	2.2	0.1	0.57
10. Mind-Body Relax	2.3	2.7	0.4	2.05*

* $P < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 2 represents the means of the ten hypnotic suggestions organized according to authoritarian and permissive experimental conditions. In each type of suggestions, the permissive wording resulted in higher mean scores. The t values indicate that 5 of 10 permissive suggestions were higher than chance.

TABLE 3
Correlation between Technique of Hypnosis
and Personality Variable

Personality Variable	Technique of Hypnosis	
	Authoritarian	Permissive
Absorption	r .52**	r .28**
Interpersonal Trust	r .22*	r .16
Attitude Toward Hypnosis	r .35**	r .06

** $p < .01$
* $p < .05$

As is evident in Table 3, authoritarian hypnosis was more strongly correlated with the three personality variables than was permissive hypnosis. All personality variables were significantly and positively related to the authoritarian hypnosis, but only absorption was significantly related to permissive hypnosis.

Discussion

The results of this study give support to Wilson and Barber's decision to word the CIS permissively. Although further research will be needed before one can assert that other measures of hypnotic responsiveness are too authoritarian, these results provide support for such a contention.

The finding that the authoritarianly worded suggestions were more distinctly correlated to the three personality variables was surprising, but suggests that personality variables are important considerations when authoritarianly worded suggestions are used. For instance a highly absorbed, trusting person with a favorable attitude toward hypnosis may be more effectively hypnotized with authoritarian techniques, whereas a marginally attending, untrusting person with a negative attitude toward hypnosis may be resistive to authoritarianly worded suggestions.

Permissive suggestions seem to be more effective with subjects as a whole. If a hynotist has limited information about a client's personality (which is often the case with new clients), it seems reasonable that permissive suggestions will be more effective. As the hypnotist gains more knowledge of the client through observation and objective measurement, either of the two methods of hypnosis may be found to be more beneficial. The eventual development of a prehypnosis inventory may help future hypnotists decide which technique to use with which clients. Obviously much is conjecture at this point, based on the findings of this study. More research on clinical populations is needed. A logical next step would be to repeat this study with one of the scales that Wilson and Barber refer to as being "too authoritarian." Perhaps the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility could be rewritten with more permissive phrasing and this modification could then be compared to the original script.

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